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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #P-3

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
Lead Assistant Division Chief for Censuses
Field Division

Attention: Management Training Branch (FLD)

From: Howard Hogan *Howard Hogan*
Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Prepared By: Nathan Carter
Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject: Observation of Questionnaire Assistance Center and Be Counted
Operations in the Chicago Far North Local Census Office

Introduction

On April 6 and 7, I went to the Chicago Far North Local Censuses Office (LCO) to observe the Questionnaire Assistance Center (QAC) and Be Counted operations. I was hoping to observe the type of assistance being provided but because of the low traffic in the QACs I was only able to see one person come in for assistance. I interviewed the clerks to gather information on the types of assistance they provided. I also wanted to look at some Be Counted distribution sites.

Specific Observations

When I arrived at the LCO, I met the LCO Manager (LCOM). He was the former Assistant Manager for Field Operations, but had been made the LCOM a week before I got there. He explained some of the challenges that their particular LCO faced. These include:

- The LCO is located outside of the geographic area it covers.
- The LCOM was let go about a week before I arrived.
- The LCO never had all of the LCO management positions filled.
- They were dealing with negative press coverage.
- The Congresswoman for the district where the LCO is located requested that sixteen QAC sites be added on March 10, 2000.
- I was told by the LCO staff that they received direction from the Regional Census Center (RCC) that QACs would be limited to public schools and public libraries. The Partnership specialists had secured commitments for QAC sites and volunteers with community organizations that they felt they could not use as a result of this direction. It is not clear to me whether this was a misunderstanding due to some communication problem.

Despite these problems the QACs that I observed seemed to be running well. Each of the QACs I visited had D-399s and were filling them out. I visited five different QAC sites. My observations for each site follows:

Public Library

- Language assistance was provided in Urdu, Tagalog, Romanian and Russian.
- Be Counted Forms (D-10s) were available and had been given out in almost every language.
- The items on the questionnaire that people asked about the most were the housing questions.
- It was suggested that training should not be held until the training kits arrived.
- It was also suggested that the Fact Sheets, i.e., D-3236 (Rev. 11-99), should have been translated into Spanish.

Public High School

- It was Report Card Pick-Up Day, so the clerk delayed the QAC hours so he could be there while the parents were picking up the report cards.
- The principal had a positive opinion of the clerk and said that he is always there.

Public Library

- The clerk was Russian bilingual, which was good since the area has a high concentration of Russian speakers.
- The majority of people requiring assistance were elderly Russians, who had problems understanding and filling out their forms.
- The clerk made announcements in Russian about the QAC site to put in the Post Office and Russian stores in the area.

Religious Nonprofit Organization

- They had the full complement of supplies and the staff had been informed on how to provide assistance.
- There was no paid clerk at this site, but a volunteer from the organization had been trained as a clerk.

Public Library

- There was not a lot of language assistance provided at this QAC.
- The clerk had gotten questions about the form and the census during the first half of the operation, while during the second half of the operation most people wanted a Be Counted form.
- The items that generated the most requests for assistance were the Race, the number of Bedroom and the complete Kitchen questions.

I was able to visit three different Be Counted Distribution sites. My observations at each of the sites follow:

Bank

- There were posters on the door that stated that this was a Be Counted distribution site.
- It was necessary to talk to the bank teller to get a form.

Currency Exchange

- There was a Spanish census poster on the window, but no poster identifying the location as a Be Counted distribution site.
- There were no forms in sight and when I asked about them I was told by the people working at the exchange the forms had all been taken.

Post Office

- There were no posters on the door or any where in the Post Office. I was told by the manager that it was not allowed to hang up posters anywhere in the Post Office.
- There were no forms in sight and when I asked about them I was told by the manager that she did not want to put them out because they would be all over the floor by the end of the day. She was quite puzzled why no one had requested any form from them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For upcoming operations, it is important that the Far North LCO get a full complement of people in management positions. Most of the problems that the LCO experienced stemmed from not being fully staffed.

It is important to minimize any communication problems, ie. HQ to RCC, RCC to LCO, for future operations. While it is not possible at this time to determine exactly why the LCO thought that QACs were limited to public school and library sites, this may be indicative of a mis-communication between the RCC and the LCO, which may have impacted the effectiveness of this program.

cc:

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